Advocacy 101: Share your Voice!

August 15, 2018
Webinar Agenda

1. What is advocacy?
2. Advocacy strategies
3. Levels of advocacy
4. Federal advocacy opportunities

Why Advocate?

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, Nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”
- Dr. Seuss, The Lorax
What is Advocacy?

**Educating** and **creating awareness** among lawmakers and the general public by speaking out on issues facing the community.

Advocacy is needed, legal, and easy:
- Is your program important and making a difference?
- Do you see families struggling with hunger or other issues in your community?
- What do our lawmakers need to know about the issues you work on?

*Education lays the groundwork for strong public policy that supports our continued efforts to improve the health and nutrition of all Montanans.*
What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is attempting to influence legislators to support or oppose a particular issue or **piece of legislation**

Direct Lobbying:
- Communicating directly to legislators regarding legislation

Grassroots Lobbying:
- Influencing legislation by attempting to affect the opinion of the general public

*Public employees cannot lobby as public employees* – but you CAN lobby as a private citizen
- Not sure if it is lobbying or advocating? Make sure you’re highlighting the importance of your program or issue, rather than asking a policymaker to act in a specific way
Advocacy Strategies: Educating Lawmakers

At it’s core, advocacy is education

- Provide our lawmakers with key messages about the importance of your programs and how they impact local communities
- Invite a state Legislator or Member of Congress (or staff person) to visit your clinic to learn more about your work and meet participants
- Share client stories or testimonials to demonstrate the important impact of your program
Advocacy Strategies: Utilize Media!

Media is a great way to educate the public and our policymakers

- Write blogs, opinion pieces, or letters to the editor on:
  - The issues your program addresses
  - The successes of your program
  - The negative impacts of budget shortfalls, etc.
- Use social media to share your work with a broad audience
Get Connected

Montana Association of WIC Agencies, MAWA

- MAWA follows WIC updates from the National WIC Association
- MAWA has signed on to numerous letters in support of SNAP
  - Cuts to SNAP and all safety net programs will impact WIC clients and affect their ability to achieve the WIC nutrition goals
- MAWA is becoming more engaged in advocacy and needs your help collecting stories and testimonials for advocacy and outreach
- For more info, contact new MAWA president, Jeannine Lund jlund@flathead.mt.gov
Get Connected

Montana Food Bank Network

- MFBN advocates for programs and policies that reduce hunger in Montana
- Convene the statewide Food Security Council, FSC
  - Both MAWA and the State WIC Agency are represented on the FSC
- For more info, contact Lorianne Burhop, lburhop@mfbn.org or visit www.mfbn.org/public-policy
Get Connected

National WIC Association
Current advocacy priorities include:
1. Full funding to meet current and expected caseloads
2. Expand Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program
3. Funding for initiatives to raise awareness about infant and maternal mortality
4. Fund WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program
5. Support nutrition assistance programs such as SNAP
6. Advance policies that reflect the realities of pregnancy and raising children

Great resources at
www.nwica.org
Advocacy at All Levels

1. Local Level
   ◦ Create a community that understands and supports your program and clients
   ◦ Public opinion impacts state and national policy

2. State Level
   ◦ Share information on your program with state lawmakers
   ◦ Make sure they understand and appreciate your program

3. National Level
   ◦ Policymakers care about and need your expertise
   ◦ Make sure they know that your program is important to their communities and constituents
Montana State Legislature Convenes
January 2019

Even if you aren’t lobbying in favor or opposition to legislation, it is important to know what is happening so that you can provide the necessary education ahead of time.

**Opportunities**
- Protecting Medicaid Expansion
- Family and Medical Leave
- Other?

**Possible Threats**
- Efforts to repeal or weaken Medicaid Expansion
- Efforts to weaken SNAP
- Program cuts included in the Budget
Know What is Happening in DC

Even if you aren’t lobbying in favor or opposition to legislation, it is important to know what is happening so that you can provide the necessary education ahead of time.

2018 Farm Bill
- Reauthorizes SNAP, other nutrition programs

Child Nutrition Reauthorization
- Reauthorizes WIC, other child programs

Annual Appropriations
- Funds WIC, other nutrition programs (not SNAP)
Protect SNAP in the Farm Bill

SNAP is our largest anti-hunger, nutrition program

- 120,000 Montanans, including 1 in 5 children
- 71% of SNAP participants are in households with children
- Brought $170 million into Montana’s grocery stores, supermarkets, farmers markets last year
- Reauthorized every 5 years as part of the Farm Bill

Congress is working to pass a new Farm Bill by Sept 30, 2018
Protect SNAP in the Farm Bill

House and Senate each passed versions of the Farm Bill in late June

- House bill would cut benefits for 2 million Americans
- Partisan bill, barely passed on second attempt
  - Rep. Gianforte supported the bill
- House bill restricts eligibility by lowering gross income limit and reinstating an asset test
- Limits states’ ability to waive time limits in high unemployment areas
Protect SNAP in the Farm Bill

- Adds new time limits for parents (age 6 and up) and older adults not working 20 hrs per week
  - Shortens time limit to just one month
- Requires states to offer job training slots to everyone who would be subject to new time limits
  - Enormous, unrealistic administrative burden
  - Ignores reality that most people who can work, are working – others face significant barriers
Protect SNAP in the Farm Bill

- Senate bill protects and strengthens SNAP
- Does not cut benefits or restrict eligibility
- Finds new opportunities to strengthen SNAP
  - E & T pilots
  - 3 year certification for senior/disabled HHs
  - Improves connections between employers and E & T
  - Database to ensure no duplicate enrollment between states
- Senate bill passed with strong, bipartisan support
  - Both of MT’s Senators voted in favor
Protect SNAP in the Farm Bill

- However, harmful amendment proposed on the floor
  - Senator Tester opposed amendment, Senator Daines supported
  - Fortunately it failed but will need to continue to fight to keep policies out of final bill
    - Add work requirements and time limits for parents (age 1 and up)
    - Shortens time limit to 1 month
    - Limit geographic waivers in high unemployment areas
    - Require photo ID for SNAP customers
Protect SNAP in the Farm Bill

- A conference committee will draft a final bill
- Leadership from Ag Committees drive the process
- Crucial time for our Congressional delegation to weigh in with leadership on what they want to see in a final bill:

  No cuts or harmful change to SNAP
Protect SNAP in the Farm Bill

Take Action!

◦ Educate on importance of SNAP, impact of cuts
◦ Educate on the struggles families are facing – low wages, high cost of housing, etc.
◦ As a private citizen, urge support for a final Farm Bill that protects SNAP
Why Advocacy?

We need policy advocacy to address root causes, ensure a strong safety net, and create long-term solutions.
Why YOU?

YOU are the expert in your field, YOU see what your clients are facing, how YOUR programs are working, and understand the issues in YOUR community

- It is up to you to share this expertise and understanding with the public and our lawmakers
Ideas? Questions? Input?

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